

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF FLORA TO THE IROQUOIS.

Mrs. Erminnie A. Smith.

From Proceedings of the
American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Vol. 34. Salem: 1886.

men which sit on the wall, that they may eat *their own dung and drink their own piss* with you?" In the course of my studies, I came across a reference to a very similar dance, occurring among one of the fanatical sects of the Arabian Bedouins, but the journal in which it was recorded, the London Lancet I think, was unfortunately mislaid.

As illustrative of the tenacity with which such vile ceremonial, once adopted by a sect will adhere to it and become ingrafted upon its life, long after the motives which have suggested or commended it have vanished in oblivion, let me quote a few lines from Max Muller's "Chips from a German workshop," "Essay upon the Parsees," pp. 163-164, Scribner's Edition, 1869.

"The *Nirang* is the urine of cow, ox or she-goat, and the rubbing of it over the face and hands is the second thing a Parsee does after getting out of bed. Either before applying the *Nirang* to the face and hands, or while it remains on the hands after being applied, he should not touch anything directly with his hands; but, in order to wash out the *Nirang*, he either asks somebody else to pour water on his hands, or resorts to the device of taking hold of the pot through the intervention of a piece of cloth, such as a handkerchief, or his *sudra*, i. e., his blouse. He first pours water on his hand, then takes the pot in that hand and washes his other hand, face and feet." (Quoting from *Dadabhai-Nadrosi's* Description of the Parsees.)

Continuing, Max Muller says: "Strange as this process of purification may appear, it becomes perfectly disgusting when we are told that women, after childbirth, have not only to undergo this sacred ablution, but actually to drink a little of the *Nirang*, and that the same rite is imposed on children at the time of their investiture with the *Sudra* and *Koshti*, the badges of the Zoroastrian faith."

Hyer
354
IG1
SG
1886

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF FLORA TO THE IROQUOIS. By Mrs. ERMINNIE A. SMITH.¹

THERE are many circumstances which help to prove that in the distant past a certain large stock of Indians, either for their protection in establishing outposts for the acquisition of hunting facilities or for other reasons, became so dispersed as finally to receive at least six different tribal names, and to speak the several dialects, known as the Mohawk, the Oneida, the Onondaga, the Cayuga, the Seneca, and the Tuscarora.

What may have been the original name of their mother tongue, if we may use that affectionate expression, we cannot yet decide. I see no reason why it may not have been their own appellation of themselves at the present time, a name which with slight dialectical differences of sound is common to them all, namely, "Hoti-noñ-'syoñ-'nī," or "Extended House," referring to their style of architecture and manner of living.

Most writers upon the Iroquois, however, consider that name to date from a confederacy, reuniting this family, supposed to have been originated by the mythical Haiä-hwä't'-thä.

From the easily distinguishable resemblances between these dialects, the early French grouped them as the "Iroquois," a word supposed to mimic two very frequent endings common to all the different tribes.

Under the system of Indian nomenclature lately adopted by the Bureau of Ethnology, the term "Iroquoian" has been applied to this group.

In a paper which I had the honor of reading before the Association some years ago, I endeavored to explain some of the differences between the dialects composing this group and some probable causes of the same, but in this brief study, I shall have occasion to note more particularly their marked resemblances, confining my examples within the limited scope of my subject.

In a list containing forty names of trees and plants which I procured from each of the six tribes, more than half have the same name in each one of the dialects.

The differing names are nearly all confined to the Seneca and Cayuga dialects.

¹ This paper is published without revision by Mrs. Smith, whose death, it is my sad duty to announce, occurred on June 9, 1886, at her home in Jersey City.—EDITOR.

Hyer 6979

Among the marked resemblances are the following:—

ENGLISH.	TUSCARORA.
Beam Tree,	Nă-rhă'-kwî'.
Beans,	U-Çă'-hă'-rhă, or, Çă'-hă'.
Beech Tree,	U-tekă ⁿ rh'-hă'.
Corn,	U-nă ⁿ -'hă.
Cranberry,	Tu'ks'wă'-nă ⁿ .
Cypress,	U-nă'-tu'-yă'.
Hemlock,	U-nă ⁿ -'tă'.
Hops,	U-teî'-tcă'.
Mulberry,	Çhu'-yăç.
Raspberry,	Tsyu-tă'-kwă-kă'yă ⁿ .
Raspberry, Red,	U-nă'-tcu'-kwă.
Rice,	U-nă'-tcă'.
Spruce,	U-teu'-ku'-nă ⁿ .
Tamarack,	Kă-nă ⁿ -'t ⁿ ăç
Tobacco,	Tcărhu-hu'.
White Pine,	U-nă ⁿ -tă'.
White Cedar,	U-çu'-rhă'-tă'.
Wild Cherry,	Ă'-rbî'.
Winter Green,	Kă-nă-kă ⁿ 'să'-krhăç.
Turnip,	U-bcî'-kwă'.

These then are pure Iroquoian words, souvenirs of prehistoric forests where the crack of a rifle was unheard and unknown, and of a time when special uses and qualities, fanciful ideas, or supposed resemblances were the science of nomenclature.

Though unwritten, can this Iroquoian language properly be termed "prehistoric" when even its isolated words represent beautiful thoughts and images, and are in themselves a history, and representatives of the mode of thought in that distant age, when they were spoken?

Let us decipher a few of these ancient words and compare them with as many in English, and they will reveal to us at least the sameness in the underlying structure of languages, whether they be high up or low down on the rounds of the ladder of development.

To the native Iroquois the white ash was the bow tree and the black ash the canoe tree, implying that from these two trees were fashioned those indispensable articles.

The elm tree was the symbol of grace, and happy the Iroquoian maiden who in her childhood had drunk of its sap, and was therefore destined to be as stately.

The spruce was named from its erect cones; the apple was the large fruit. The original meaning of the strawberry is unknown, but a pineapple is now termed "large strawberry."

Water melon translates "It sheds its blush," and musk melon "ripening fruit." Corn means seed, marking it as having been at some period their only agricultural product. This is further proven from the fact that corn has in the Iroquois a verb "to plant" of its own which is in reality the name of the famous Cornplanter, the word "corn" not being present in that proper name. Wintergreen translates pleasant odor, and the word for cranberry imitates the sound which is made when picking this fruit.

We may not find in this nomenclature the poetry of many of our own floral names, such as "eyebright," "bluebell," "maiden's hair," "lady slipper," and some others. But may there not be many Iroquoian words whose literal meanings are as beautiful, though now as unknown to those who use them as is Chaucer's "Day's-eye" to many English speaking people who to-day find no sentiment in the word daisy?

We find in Iroquois many homonyms the explanations of which are very curious. Our dandelion anglicised from the French *dent de lion* (lion's tooth), alluding to the shape of its petals, is in Tuscarora, Kă'-rhă, and, coming simultaneously with the sturgeon is said to announce its arrival and is therefore called by the same name as that fish. Correspondingly in English we have the "Cuckoo flower," so called because this orchis blossoms about the time that the cuckoo is first heard.

The Iroquois find a resemblance between the cucumber and the warty toad, and they have the same name; and the words for turnip and fist are alike.

Many homonyms in English arise in the same manner, from similar resemblances; for examples, dock is from the Icelandic *docke*, a tail, to cut short, and dock is a taprooted plant, or plant with a tail; also flag to grow weary, from moving to and fro, so flag an ensign which moves in the wind, and flag, a plant from its waving motion.

The witch hazel in Tuscarora is named from its pith, the alder from its lack of it. Oats in Mohawk are named from their droop-

ing tendency which reminds us of the poetical German name "golden rain," given to our drooping laburnum.

The quantities of blueberries growing upon the Alleghanies gave their name to those mountains. The word Erie is also Iroquoian, named from its being the locality where wild cherries abounded.

The reflection of the trees in the lake at Toronto gave that city the Iroquois name which it still bears. How familiar is this system of nomenclature to those interested in the origin of names!

Madeira was named by the Portuguese from its great forests; the classic name Peloponnesus was changed to Morea from the resemblance of that region to the shape of a mulberry leaf, and the meaning of Florida is familiar to all.

The synonyms of the Iroquoian group probably date from their separation into tribes. Words occur among the different tribes which are radically different but which have the same literal meaning. Thus in Tuscarora a head of cabbage is *u-tă'-rhă'*, while in Mohawk the word *o-noñ'-tei* means literally the same thing,—head.

In Tuscarora, *wăt-ăñ'-rhăñ'-ih-thă'*, signifying the poplar, translates literally, "its wings (its leaves)" up and down, while in the Mohawk *wă-ne-ră-toñ'-thă*, signifies the same thing.

That the Tuscarora name for the pear is quite modern is amusingly apparent. The word for bear in that dialect is *u'-tei'-rhăñ'*; having no labials in Tuscarora, and mistaking the "p" for a "b," thus supposing the English called the fruit a bear, they applied to it their own name for that animal, *u'-tei'-rhăñ'*.

The Iroquois appellations for flowers are often used for feminine proper names, as *A-woñ-ne-oñt*, hanging flower; *Kă-tci'-tci'-stă'-kwăst*, beautiful flower; while trees and their qualities often serve for masculine proper names. This practice of surnaming girls after flowers and beautiful objects is quite common to us and is of very ancient date, but it is noticeable that in modern times more plants have been named after men than contrariwise, as the Gentian from Gentius, Dahlia after Dahl, a Swede who introduced its cultivation, Fuchsia named after Fuchs, Magnolia after Magnol, while the Camellia received its name from being introduced from Japan into Europe by Camellus, a Moravian Jesuit.

That an original name in Iroquois has often been transferred to

other than the original object, is verified by examples like the following :—

U-nāñ-çä'	= potato	in Tuscarora.
O-noñ-sä	= onion	" Onondaga.
Wi'-säñt	= strawberry	" Tuscarora.
Wis	= plum	" Onondaga.

Something corresponding to this is the case with the German word, *tartuffle*, given to the potato on account of its resemblance to their tartoffle or truffle. They have since changed the t into a k, making kartoffle.

These analogies might be carried much farther if the subject were extended outside the chosen limit of Flora, but I doubt if any other subject would be as fruitful in producing examples capable of comparing favorably with those selected from a language into whose treasury all civilized nations have lavished their contributions.

There was much in nature incomprehensible to the Iroquois mind but not so were the forest trees. They were his guide, his friends and companions, and all vegetation served to supply so many of his wants that we find the six religious festivals of the Iroquois principally devoted to giving thanks for the maple, strawberry, green corn, bean and squash, calling them "Our life, our supporters;" whilst tobacco was continually thrown upon the fire that their prayers might ascend in its cloud of smoke.

The most striking metaphors of the Iroquoian orators were those in which they likened themselves to the forest trees. To a friend who called upon the great Oneida chief *Skä-nä* "doñ" a short time before his death, he expressed himself thus: "I am an aged hemlock, the winds of a hundred winters have swept through my branches. I am dead at the top. The generation to which I belonged has run away and left me. Why I live the Great Spirit knows. Pray to him that I may have patience to wait my appointed time to die."

A lady who knew the fondness of the famous Red Jacket for children inquired of him if he had any living, as she knew that several had been taken away. Fixing his eyes upon her with a mournful expression, he replied: "Red Jacket was once a great man, and in favor with the great spirit. He was a lofty pine among the smaller trees of the forest. But after years of glory he degraded himself by drinking the fire water of the white man.

The Great Spirit has looked upon him in anger, and his lightning has stripped the pine of its branches."

The early youth of this great orator was spent in the beautiful valley of the Genesee. There were his favorite hunting grounds. There his memory loved to linger. During the strife of wars and the more bitter strife of treaties, he had indulged very little in his favorite pastime, but when a day of comparative quiet came, he took his gun and went forth in the hope of finding a deer. He had gone but a short distance, when a clearing opened before him; the old man turned aside and wandered in another direction, but soon came to a place where the white man was turning the earth up in dark furrows over a large field. It was then that he sat down upon a fallen oak and wept bitter tears, that the haunts of his youth were being despoiled of all that had rejoiced the heart of his childhood and manhood.

The medicinal properties of plants and roots were understood by the Iroquois, and although the knowledge was principally confined to the "medicine men," we find in the myths many allusions to the wonderful cures produced by the use of even the simplest vegetable remedies.

The origin of medicine among the Tuscaroras was related to me as follows by Chief John Mountpleasant of the Bear clan:—Once upon a time a sickly old man, covered with sores, entered an Indian village where over each wigwam was placed the sign of the clan of its possessor; for instance, the beaver skin denoting the Beaver clan; the deer skin the Deer clan. At each of these wigwams the old man applied for food and a night's lodging, but his repulsive appearance rendered him an object of scorn, and the Wolf, and the Tortoise and the Heron had bidden the abject old man to pass on. At length, tired and weary, he arrived at a wigwam where a bear skin betokened the clanship of its owner. This he found inhabited by a kind-hearted woman who immediately refreshed him with food and spread out skins for his bed. Then she was instructed to go in search of certain herbs, which she prepared according to his directions, and through their efficacy he was soon healed. Then he commanded that she should treasure up this secret. A few days after, he sickened with a fever, and again commanded her to search for other herbs, and was again healed. This being many times repeated, he at last told his benefactress that his mission was accomplished, and that she was now endowed with all the secrets

for curing disease in all its forms, and that before her wigwam should grow a hemlock tree whose branches should reach high into the air above all others, to signify that her clan should increase and multiply and that the bear should take precedence of all other clans.

The "origin of medicine" among the Senecas is as follows:— Nearly two hundred years ago, a man went into the woods on a hunting expedition. He was quite alone. He camped out in a field and was wakened in the night by the sound of singing and a noise like the beating of a drum. He could not sleep any more, so he arose and went in the direction of the sound. To his surprise the place had all the appearance of being inhabited. On the one hand there was a large squash vine with three squashes on it, and on the other a hill of corn. And three ears of corn grew apart from all the others. He was unable to guess what it meant, but started off on his hunting once more, determined to return some evening, being both curious and uneasy. In the night as he slept near by he heard again a noise, and awaking, saw a man looking at him, who said, "Beware! I am after you; what you saw was sacred; you deserve to die." But the people who now gathered around said they would pardon it, and would tell him the secret they possessed. "The great medicine for wounds," said the man who had awakened him, "is squash and corn; come with me and I will teach you."

He led him to the spot where the people were assembled, and there he saw a fire and a laurel bush which looked like iron. The crowds danced around it, singing and rattling gourd shells, and he begged them to tell him what they did it for, then one of them heated a stick and thrust it right through his cheek, and then applied some of the medicine to prove to him how quickly it could heal the wound. Then they did the same to his leg. All the time they sang a tune, they called it the "medicine song," and taught it to him. Then he turned to go home, and all at once he perceived that they were not human beings but animals, bears, beavers and foxes, which all flew off as he looked. They had given him directions to take one stalk of corn and dry the cob and pound it very fine, and to take one squash, and cut it up and pound that, and they then showed him how much for a dose. He was to take water from a running spring, and always from up the stream, and never down. He made up the prescription and used it with very

great success, and made enough before he died to last over one hundred years.

This was the origin of the great medicine of the Senecas. The people sing over its preparation every time the deer changes his coat, and when it is administered to a patient, they sing the "medicine song," while they rattle a gourd shell as accompaniment and burn tobacco. Burning tobacco is the same as praying. In times of trouble or fear after a bad dream, or any event which frightens them, they say, "My mother went out and burned tobacco."

The medicine is prepared now with the addition of meat.

Numerous are the Iroquois legends regarding the Flora surrounding them.

I will close with the origin of the pond lily from the Huron-Iroquois to which Aldrich in poetizing has added if possible another tint.

Young Wă'-wăh had been killed in the war, Măntowonă, his love, stoically heard of his death and meekly continued her care of an aged father. But when the old man died she wept not, and while the mourners were chanting the dirges she stole from among them toward the bright water, but Nă-hă'-ho who had long loved her in secret quickly pursued her to the river bank—

"What did he see there
Could so appall him?
Only a circle
Swiftly expanding,
Fading before him.
But as he watched it
Up from the centre
Slowly superbly
Rose a Pond Lily."

BURIAL CUSTOMS OF OUR ABORIGINES. By HENRY GILLMAN,
Detroit, Michigan.

In a paper¹ read before the American Association, at the Detroit meeting, August 16, 1875, extended mention is made by the

¹"The Ancient men of the Great Lakes," by Henry Gillman: Proceedings of the American Association, 1875.

writer of the peculiar custom of perforating the human skull after death. The discovery of the custom, which seems to be associated with some interesting and curious superstition of the early inhabitants of this country, was made in the year 1869, when I exhumed from the Great Mound on the Rouge River, Michigan, the fragments of two skulls each of which presented the peculiarity. As additional material and facts were accumulated by me, in the course of my investigations, I continued to disseminate the information through various scientific channels,² to which it is unnecessary I should do more than simply refer. Lately, in the *American Naturalist*, I gave a description of perforated crania recently taken from mounds on the Detroit River. In exhibiting to the Association two specimens of those skulls, I shall take occasion to allude to or describe some of the burial customs of our native Indian tribes which have come under my personal observation, and which may be calculated to throw some light on the very remarkable custom of which these skulls are an illustration.

In the first of these fragmentary crania, the cephalic index would throw it into the medium or orthocephalic group, or, to follow the nomenclature of Prof. Broca, the mesaticephalic division. The single circular perforation occupies, as usual, a central position at the vertex of the skull, being situated on the sagittal suture, about 0.6 of an inch back of its junction with the coronal suture. The perforation is 0.4 of an inch in diameter, and was probably made in the same manner as were all those I have seen, by a rude stone implement rotated by hand.

The second specimen is evidently not of as great antiquity as the first. Its fragmentary condition, the occipital bone and parts of the parietal bones, etc., being wanting, prevents taking most of the usual measurements but though a smaller and narrower skull than the first mentioned, its cephalic index would, doubtless, place it in the same range, viz., that of the medium or mesaticephali. It is, however, most interesting in presenting the unusual feature of having two perforations. The smaller of these, less than 0.4 of an inch in diameter, is situated on the sagittal suture, and at a point about 0.1 of an inch back of its junction with the coronal suture.

²See "Certain Characteristics pertaining to Ancient Man in Michigan;" Smithsonian Report for 1875. Also "Artificial perforation of the Cranium;" *American Naturalist*, August, 1875, Vol. ix, p. 473. And "Additional facts concerning Artificial perforation of the Cranium in Ancient Mounds in Michigan," read before American Association, Nashville Meeting, September 4, 1877.

AYER

354

I61 S6

1886

